

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ISTANB 03767 241011Z

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SOPN, TU

SUBJECT: TURKISH-U.S. RELATIONS

SOME THOUGHTFUL TURKS ARE GIVING SERIOUS CONSIDERATION WHETHER THEIR CLOSE ASSOCIATION WITH THE U.S. SERVES THEIR BEST NATIONAL INTEREST. THEIR DOUBTS AND SEARCH FOR VIABLE ALTERNATIVES, NOT NECESSARILY REFLECTING GOT POLICIES, WERE REVEALED IN SEPARATE CONVERSATIONS POST BPAO HAD WITH FOREIGN EDITORS OF LEADING NEWSPAPERS MILLIYET AND CUMHURIYET.

PRODDED ON QUESTION WHERE HE SAW TURKEY'S INTEREST LEAD ITS FOREIGN POLICY, CUMHURIYET'S ALI SIRMEN REPLIED THAT WHILE HE HOPED FOR A STRONG U.S. PRESENCE IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN TO COUNTER-BALANCE SOVIET INFLUENCE, HE WOULD NOT WANT TURKEY TO BE THE "BULWARK OF NATO'S SOUTHERN FLANK." THIS, HE POINTED OUT, WOULD DEPRIVE TURKEY OF THE POSSIBILITY OF BENEFITING FROM DETENTE, WHILE SUBORDINATING TURKEY'S REAL PROBLEMS WHICH ARE WITH GREECE. HE WAS QUICK TO ADMIT THAT THIS REQUIRED A PRECARIOUS BALANCING ACT WHICH, HE FELT, HIS COUNTRY WAS NOT YET IN A POSITION TO CARRY OUT EFFECTIVELY. HE DID DESCRIBE IT AS A DESIRABLE GOAL HOWEVER, EMPHASIZING THAT HE

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PAGE 02 ISTANB 03767 241011Z

HOPED THE U.S. WOULD DEMONSTRATE AN UNDERSTANDING

ATTITUDE TOWARD SUCH A DEVELOPMENT. IN SIRMEN'S OPINION, ANYTHING LESS THAN U.S. UNDERSTANDING FOR THIS POSITION MIGHT WELL ACCELERATE AN EVEN STRONGER TREND TOWARD TURKEY'S SEEKING AN INDEPENDENT ROAD. HE STRESSED, HOWEVER, THAT IT WAS IN TURKEY'S INTEREST TO SEE A STRONG U.S. PRESENCE IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN AND ADMITTED THAT HIS OPINION SMACKED OF HAVING HIS CAKE AND EAT IT. TO WHICH HE REPLIED, "AND WHY NOT TRY IT? IF THE U.S. REMAINS STRONG IN THE AREA, IT MIGHT WORK. IF IT DOES NOT, WE WILL HAVE TO ADJUST TO A NEW REALITY ANYWAY."

MILLIYET'S SAMI KOHEN PROVIDED ANOTHER STRAW IN THE WIND. HE TOLD US THAT THE TURKISH NEWS AGENCY (THA) WILL SHORTLY BEGIN CARRYING TASS (SOVIET) NEWS DESPATCHES. THIS IS THE RESULT OF AN AGREEMENT REACHED BETWEEN THA AND TASS. UNTIL NOW TASS OFFICES IN TURKEY HAD CONFINED THEIR ACTIVITIES TO NEWS GATHERING BUT HAD NOT ENGAGED IN NEWS DISSEMINATION. UNTIL FAIRLY RECENTLY, IT WOULD HAVE BEEN "UNTHINKABLE" THAT A SOVIET NEWS AGENCY WOULD HAVE READY ACCESS TO THE TURKISH MEDIA THROUGH A RESPECTED TURKISH NEWS AGENCY.

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